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ABSTRACT

In an effort to update teacher evaluation systems to reflect changing attitudes toward the teaching profession and to focus on staff development, state departments of education and school districts have designed mentor and master teacher programs, career ladders, shared leadership programs, and differentiated evaluation programs. They have also adopted commercial programs such as Madeline Hunter's Program for Effective Teaching (PET). These progressive programs all link their evaluation systems to research on effective practices, provide training for evaluators, hold administrators accountable for implementing effective evaluations, focus staff development programs on evaluation-identified deficiencies, and make teachers active partners in the evalaution process. This report discusses the contributions of three progarms--Tennessee's Career Ladder Program, the Florida Performance Measurement System, and the Hunter PET model--to improving evaluation of teacher performance. Implications and conclusions are discussed. Participative supervision for teachers is essential for improved classroom instruction. More changes are needed to increase teaching professionalism and move educators from isolated positions to more collegial associations. (12 references) (MLH)

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TEACHER EVALUATION IN AN ERA OF SCHOOL REFORM

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Running head: TEACHER EVALUATION

Teacher Evaluation

In An Era Of School Reform

The demand for an educated populace able to compete in a highly technological, information based society has become crucial in order to maintain American leadership among industrialized nations. Every year fewer jobs are available to the uneducated and unskilled. American students are ranking lower on standardized tests than their counterparts from other industrialized nations, and school drop out rates are increasing. This combination of falling student achievement scores and rising drop out rates has undermined public confidence in our schools (Goldberg & Harvey, 1983). Both government and business leaders are alarmed at the lack of preparation many students demonstrate in the job market upon graduation. Media attention focused on the problem of lower student performance has spirited public outcry demanding educational reforms. Recent educational research is finding increasing support for the attention to the relationship between the quality of teaching and the level of student performance. Given this relationship, educators are pressured to raise the quality of teaching in the public schools.

The focus on teacher evaluation intensified in 1983 with the release of "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The results of this study seeking

methods of improving the quality of public education produced several recommendations for improving the quality of teaching (cited in Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin & Bernstein, 1984). These recommendations appear contrary to previous educational policies based on the premise that teacher-proof curriculums, test-based instructional management, and student competence testing alone would improve learning. These policies assumed that adherence to a predetermined teaching format would result in the desired level of learning. Teachers were viewed more as laborers implementing a prescribed program in a manner determined by policymakers further up the educational hierarchy than as professionals with a repertoire of techniques and the ability to decide for themselves which techniques should be applied.

This perception of teachers led to the enactment of regulations and mandates designed to improve the quality of education without actually addressing the competency of those hired to "process" students through the schedules, curriculums, and exit tests required by the schools. Policymakers sought to "fix" problems in education by enacting more regulations. Student failure to achieve higher level learning was attributed to the nonconformity to the prescribed methods. The solution to this problem was thought to be more detailed prescriptions and more careful monitoring of their implementation.

Teachers did not need to be experts in order to function in this type of educational environment. Decisions were made with little or no direct input from teachers. Policymakers found it safer not to "empower" teachers because correct implementation of prescribed policies depends on uniformity controlled at a higher level (Darling-Hammond, 1988).

The Excellence Commission established the need for better teachers in order to achieve higher student learning. It acknowledged the necessity to attract talented undergraduates to the profession and the need to motivate them to teach and to remain in the field. The commission recommended that salaries be increased, professionally competitive, and performance based. Administrators using effective teacher evaluation systems with peer review components would make decisions regarding promotions, salary, tenure, and retention. These effective teacher evaluation systems would provide the basis for rewarding superior teachers, motivating average ones to achieve further professional development, and improving or terminating poor teachers. The idea of rewarding superior performance was endorsed by President Reagan and greeted with enthusiasm by the general public eager to hear the solution to educational reform had been found (Wise et al., 1984).

The educational community faced a big obstacle to the system of merit pay. The commission's recommendations were

based on the premise that effective teacher evaluation instruments were already in place. Unfortunately, this has not proven to be the case. Most teacher evaluations were handled in a perfunctory manner by school principals (Tesch, Nyland, & Kernutt, 1987). The main purpose of these annual evaluations was to determine whether or not a teacher met minimal expectations in teaching. Minimal expectations included punctuality, providing a safe learning environment, and upholding school rules and district policy. Evaluation was directed at screening out the "failing" teacher rather than the professional development of the 98% retained to staff classrooms.

The teacher evaluation systems needed a complete overhaul in order to reflect the changing attitude towards teaching as a profession. In the past annual teacher evaluations were rarely used as feedback linking classroom performance with effective instructional practices. Districts have now begun to utilize the research literature on effective teacher practice in developing their evaluation criteria. Studies have shown the positive relationship existing between performance on these research based criteria and increased student engagement rates, achievement, and improved school environment (Buttram & Wilson, 1987).

Educational researchers and policy makers across the country have worked to develop improved evaluation formats

that would reflect the new standards in teaching educators were setting for themselves. Evaluation goals were changed to focus on staff development. Mentor and master teacher programs were designed to assist beginning teachers as well as experienced staff strive to become superior educators. State departments of education and local school districts have established career ladders, shared leadership programs, differentiated evaluation programs, or adopted programs like the Hunter-based Program for Effective Teaching know as PET (Mandeville & Rivers, 1988) in an effort to update their evaluation systems. Although these programs differ in content, they all incorporate the five areas in which teacher evaluation practices have changed considerably in recent years. These progressive programs all link their evaluation systems to research on effective practices, provide training for evaluators, hold administrators accountable for implementing effective evaluations, focus staff development programs on evaluation identified deficiencies, and make teachers active partners in the evaluation process (Buttram et al, 1987).

Tennessee Career Ladder

Tennessee implemented the first statewide Career Ladder Program (Furtwengler, 1987) for teacher evaluation in the nation. This evaluation process uses a multi-data source system to assess a teacher's competence in six areas: planning, teaching strategies, classroom management, student

evaluation, leadership, and communication. Information in the multi-data source system is assembled from classroom observation, dialogue between teachers and their evaluators, principal questionnaires, student questionnaires, professional growth and leadership documentation, and written examinations.

During the first year of the program, teachers were asked to compile extensive portfolios containing lesson plans, classroom management procedures, sample student evaluations, and documentation of professional development and leadership activities. Teachers spent endless hours on their portfolios. Compiling the portfolios proved to be an exhaustive job that resulted in little direct improvement in classroom instruction. Complete portfolios were dropped from the program in the second year. Teachers continued to document their professional growth and leadership activities.

The Tennessee Career Ladder Program is a performance based plan for rewarding excellence in teaching with financial incentives and 10, 11, or 12 month contract work. There are three levels of career ladder certification. Level I is open to teachers in their second through fourth years of teaching. Certification for Level II requires eight or more years of teaching and Level III requires twelve or more years. Teachers can elect to stay at a particular level.

Candidates for Level I certification are evaluated

using the State Model for Local Evaluation. This procedure, approved by the State Board of Education, is implemented by the local school district. The school site principal evaluates four groups of teachers: first year teachers, teachers in years two, three, or four, all teachers with four or more years of teaching experience who choose not to participate in the incentive plan, and teachers with four or more years of experience who wish to remain certificated at Level I (French, Malo, & Rakow, 1988). The principal uses the same criteria for evaluation previously discussed: planning, delivery, student evaluation, classroom management, professional growth and leadership development activities, and written tests of professional knowledge and reading and writing skills. French, Malo & Rakow believe that making principals responsible for choosing the good, better, and best teachers among their staff has the potential for weakening the principals' attempts to achieve a cohesive staff organization within the school community. They believe principals should continue to be primary evaluators in employment decisions, but not in merit pay decisions.

Candidates for Levels II and III are evaluated by peer evaluators using the state developed, state administered system. The state system uses data collected from the teacher candidate, such as the professional development and leadership summaries, classroom observations and dialogues

by a three member peer evaluator team, student questionnaires, principal questionnaires, and consensuses rating based on patterns developed over day long classroom visits by each evaluator. The student questionnaires differ at the elementary and secondary levels, and are administered by the peer evaluators. Candidates do not pass or fail each instrument. There is a complex scoring system in which teachers receive a total score and a score for each competence domain. There are 18 indicators of performance and 85 measurement items on seven different instruments. The scoring procedure transfers the raw scores on dissimilar scales to scores on a standard 200-800 reporting scale so they can be combined. Successful candidates for Level II must achieve a total score of 600 and successful candidates for Level III need a score of 700 (French et al., 1988).

Ninety percent of Tennessee's teachers have entered the Career Ladder Program. The peer teaching component especially appears to be very highly regarded. The peer evaluators come from outside the local school district. They receive three to four weeks of training. The peer evaluators make six classroom visits with pre and post conferences. The teachers seem to be very receptive to well trained peers conducting their evaluations, especially if the evaluators are also from the same grade and subject area (Furtwengler, 1987).

Florida Performance Measurement System

Smith, Peterson, & Micceri (1987) published a review of the Florida Performance Measurement System (FPMS) that they developed to identify teaching behaviors. The FPMS is a research based program comprised of both formative and summative instruments. Through teacher evaluations, these researchers sought to determine the degree to which teachers apply the body of objective knowledge about teaching procedures, and the effects of this application on their instruction. Smith et al. acknowledged the principle that learning is the desired product of teaching. However, they argued that learning is also conditioned by factors outside of the classroom, and that teachers should not be held responsible for outside influences. Their research results support their belief that teachers can and should be held accountable for following valid diagnostic and pedagogical procedures.

FPMS was developed in four phases. First, research was compiled on generic teaching methods from two sources: process-product and experimental studies. Second, Smith et al. organized the results into six domains of teaching: planning, classroom management, organization and development of instruction, lesson presentation, verbal and nonverbal communication and testing. These six domains were broken down into 34 concepts and 124 indicators, each with supporting research. Third, using the concepts and

indicators derived from the second phase, the researchers developed six observation instruments: one summative and five formative. The final phase of the project was the reliability and validity testing of the summative instrument to determine norm scores. Smith et al. discovered a significant difference in scores between elementary grades and post-elementary grades. They decided to create two norm groups.

The FPMS developed by Smith et al. has been used extensively by school districts in Florida. Trained observers using the summative instrument evaluate teachers to identify any problem area of teaching domain. The formative instruments are then used to determine the specific teaching behavior within the domain requiring remediation. An extensive training program involving mostly principals and supervisors rather than peer teachers has been established. This training consists of three days of observation techniques followed by criterion testing, an examination of teacher effectiveness research, a coding quiz, and periodic update sessions. Smith and his colleagues believe teachers respond positively to FPMS because of its research supported foundation. Teachers have more enthusiasm and confidence in an evaluation system not based on the evaluator's personal experience or opinion. The observer's job is just to code teaching behaviors without passing judgment.

One of the strongest characteristics of FPMS is that the system does not require any particular style of teaching. The observation instruments are valid for coding instruction that is either highly or loosely structured, teacher-centered or student-centered, inductive or deductive.

School districts in Florida use the information gathered from FPMS evaluations to design their inservice staff development programs. Colleges use the information from beginning teacher evaluations to assess the success of their teacher training programs. The program is not used as an incentive for merit pay (Smith et al., 1987).

Program for Effective Teaching

Over the past decade, several states including Missouri, Minnesota, and South Carolina have adopted the Madeline Hunter-based Program for Effective Teaching (PET) (Mandeville & Rivers, 1988). PET is a staff development approach to education reform. The objective of the seven-step Hunter model is to enable teachers to make conscious and appropriate decisions in lesson planning and delivery that would result in improved instruction and increased student achievement.

The South Carolina Department of Education chose 24 educators representing eleven school districts to participate in an intensive 30-day workshop conducted by out-of-state trainers in 1981. The participants from this

workshop trained other educators. Teachers were trained in "coaching" methods to help others implement the Hunter model. Classroom observation and feedback coaching are major components of the program. PET is a continuous staff development process requiring about two years of practice with the model before teachers achieve a level called conditional knowledge of teaching. At this level teachers are able to recognize when and why various teaching procedures are appropriate and when modifications are necessary (Mandeville & Rivers, 1988).

School districts in South Carolina, Missouri, and Minnesota have adapted their teacher evaluation instruments to assess the Madeline Hunter style of teaching (DiBernardo & Stiles, 1988). Although Hunter insists her seven-step teaching model was not intended to be an evaluation tool, school districts implementing PET expect their teachers to use the model, and their performances are evaluated accordingly.

DiBernardo and Stiles believe prescriptive methods for instructional improvement, such as PET, fail to achieve their goals. They find many teachers only structure their lessons to the Hunter model on evaluation days. Teachers complain the model is too restrictive. Most important, however, Mandeville and Rivers (1988) conclude that PET provides a statewide common framework for improving instruction, but there is no research to support the

relationship between implementation of the Hunter model and increased student achievement.

Implications and Conclusion

State boards of education and local school districts have made important advancements in teacher evaluation methods based on the research on effective teaching practices. More changes are necessary to increase the professionalism in teaching and move educators from positions of isolation into associations of collegiality. Darling-Hammond (1988) finds that collegiality among educators promotes peer assessment practices that enable teachers to become less process oriented and more learner centered.

Participation supervision for teachers is one of the most difficult changes for administrators to make, but is essential for improved classroom instruction (Manatt, 1987). Cooperation and honest communication must exist between teachers and their evaluators that can only happen when both are perceived as equals within the profession.

David Conley (1987) finds eight important characteristics found in successful evaluation systems. All participants must accept their evaluation system as valid and thoroughly understand the mechanics of the system. Teachers need to understand that the established performance has a clear and consistent rationale based on research. Evaluators must be trained in methods of observation, report

writing, and remediation techniques. Districts have different levels of evaluation for different goals. For instance, effective systems distinguish between beginning teachers, teachers on the growth and improvement track, and teachers in need of remediation. Successful evaluation systems employ a variety of assessment methods including classroom observation, cooperative professional development and administrative monitoring. The most important characteristic of a successful evaluation system is a high priority in the school district. Evaluation systems are time consuming and costly. If a district fails to expend the resources necessary for effective assessment, the value of the assessment itself suffers.

Lee Shulman (1988) believes a combination of current evaluation systems would be ideal. He favors "coached" portfolios that would provide the occasion for interaction and mentoring among peers, classroom observation, and assessment centers. All of this would be very costly, but if better teacher assessment produces improved instruction and therefore increased student achievement the end result would more than justify the cost.

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